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ABSTRACT

Varied aspects of adult learning and media use are discussed in three papers. In the first, "Adult Learning and Television," a summary of concerns about the negative influences of commercial television viewing and criticisms of instructional television is followed by a discussion of the potential of new technologies for two-way communication to expand and improve educational services for adults. Cautions regarding television use for adults and questions for debate are suggested. The second paper, "Adult Learning and the Overhead Projector," describes procedures for preparing overhead transparencies and offers some guiding principles for using the overhead projector with adult classes. The final paper, "Using Media with Adults," expands on the following six guidelines for successfully using media in the classroom or at a conference: (1) know the audience; (2) know what it is you want the audience to learn; (3) gather and select the content; (4) rehearse the media presentation; (5) involve the audience in the learning process; and (6) test or evaluate the experience. (LMM)

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Adult Learning and Television

by

John A. Hortin

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"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Commercial television is the most ubiquitous, influential and eclectic technology we have. There are more than 144 million television sets in the United States today and that means there are more TV's in the country than telephones or bathtubs (Moody, 1980, p. 4). A typical American household has the television set on for more than six and a half hours a day (Moody, 1980, p. 4). We get our news, entertainment, information, ideas, and values from watching TV.

Some authors have expressed concern over the negative influences of commercial television viewing (DeFranco, 1980; Moody, 1980; Mander, 1977; Winn, 1977). These concerns have included the long-term consequences of excessive television viewing, the manipulation of viewers' minds through commercials, the possible promotion of aggressive behavior, and the negative effects on social relationships. Moody (1980) reported that children who are heavy television users display aggression, get easily distracted and lack imagination.

The Surgeon General Committee's Report on Television and Social Behavior, commissioned by the federal government at a cost of $8 million, reported that viewing television violence made children more willing to hurt people and act aggressively in their play.

Research has also shown that students who read a story tended to integrate better their own experiences with the story that was read than one they watched on television.

Wilson Bryan Key (1973, 1976) explored the manipulation of our minds by the film, television and radio industries in his two books on subliminal seduction. Key (1973, 1976) believes the people in television and other media productions use the fantasies, fears and habits of the viewers to manipulate their buying behavior. Thirty Seconds written by Michael J.

Arlen (1980) described the lavish expenditure of money, time and energy that goesinto the production of a 30-second television commercial. Arlen's book described in detail the making of a commercial, but the book also said a great deal about the values and culture of American society.

Commercial television obviously influences our private lives, and sometimes, unfortunately, it dictates how some of us spend our leisure time. Television also determines how we receive information, when we receive it, and what kind of information we receive through both commercials and programs. Programming decisions are made by executives, who have mainly the stockholders' interests in mind.

Most adults have had a great number of visual experiences through television. Ordinarily, adults' visual skills in terms of understanding, evaluating and interpreting images have not been developed by formal training. Few adults have had a hand in creating or producing visual messages; rather, the role of the typical adult with mass media has been primarily that of the spectator.

At the same time that commercial television has caused much clamor and controversy over its impact and influence, instructional television has had its critics as well. Many educators believe instructional television has had little effect on learning. Instructional television is defined as any production created to reach an educational goal or purpose. Instructional television may be transmitted by cable, satellite, traditional broadcast over air waves, closed circuit, or single videotape recording units in a classroom.

Instructional television was promoted zealously (some say overzealously) in the late 1950s and 1960s. Many schools and educational institutions spent a lot of money on equipment and facilities without spectacular success

in terms of increased learning. Instructional television producers generally copied the one-way, centralized communication approach of commercial television with little audience participation or interaction. Many of us in educational media are too familiar with the traditional lecture approach to using television in the classroom. However, there now exists the technology for two-way television communication through cable, interactive video participation with video programming and computer software, expanded programming through cable, and transmission of data bases from library networks and special information agencies. The growing personal computer technology with the involvement of individuals, special interest groups, educators, and communities should influence the use of commercial and instructional television for adult learning. Interactive video, two-way cable transmission and microcomputers provide the technology to serve adults in a much broader and better way than has been possible in the past. Adults will be able to use their home television screens for (1.) access to data bases, (2.) participation with microcomputer and video software and (3.) specialized programming. The self-guided learning that Tough (1982) said was neglected by electronic media may yet be realized in the future.

Cable enthusiasts are now talking about 100 channels available for children's, Black, Spanish, women's, religious, 24-hour weather, 24-hour news, 24-hour sports, special interest and community programming.

My own feelings about television for adult learning are cautiously optimistic. I hope the adult learner of the future will use the technology to select, create, and learn all kinds of information through cable, satellite broadcasts, videocassettes, videodiscs and microcomputers. As adult educators, we must guard against any one group or organization that might try to dominate telecommunications services, information output, or television programming.

The real danger is that those adults who might benefit from learning and gaining access to helpful information may not be able to afford those services; this is one argument for some government regulation. The opposing argument is that government regulation does not seem to work very well and often protects the industries more than it does consumers. Also, government regulation sometimes stifles original and innovative programming. The industries that are involved are powerful and the public is, by and large, uninformed. As educators, we need to become more informed and more involved. The main questions to be debated are (1.) how much regulation from government do we want in order to protect the consumer and public interests? (2.) how much do we rely on the marketplace? (3.) how can we make concerns for adult education known to legislatures and the television industry? (4.) what are the opportunities for self-guided and participatory adult learning through cable television and interactive video? and (5.) how can adult educators and learners become more involved in cable television programming?

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Adult Learning and the Overhead Projector

by

Dr. John A. Hortin

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The overhead projector is one of the most useful technologies of instruction available to the adult educator. It is easy to operate with just an on-and-off switch and a focus knob; it is also fairly inexpensive. According to The Audio-Visual Equipment Directory (28th edition), many models range in price between $200 to $300. The projectors are also quite portable, allow use in a fully lighted room, require little maintenance, allow the presenter to face the audience, and do not necessarily require a screen for good viewing. Given these advantages, the overhead projector is ideal technology for the adult educator, who often teaches in unfamiliar surroundings with no light control, no screen and no audiovisual equipment in the classroom.

Probably the most important aspect to the overhead technology system is that adult educators and their students can prepare their own materials. Locally produced overhead transparencies can make teaching and learning rewarding and unique when the whole class gets involved in the process. The most common method for making transparencies is to draw with overhead transparency marking pens directly on clear sheets of acetate. The teacher does not even have to be a good artist because he can trace the visual simply by putting the acetate over a graph, chart, picture or image and tracing right onto the acetate. Most stages in overhead projectors are 10" x 10", so acetate sheets

8" x 9" work best. Acetate sheets are available commercially from most school supply stores. Teachers should also be sure to use the special pens designed for the overhead, for not all marking pens will work.

Other methods for making transparencies require a transparency making machine and a master drawn by the presenter. Masters can be artwork, paste ups, drawings, tracings, photocopies or graphic designs that teachers or students run through a special machine. Such machines or methods include Thermofax, Technifax, electrostatic, spirit duplication and the color lift process. The Thermofax system is basically a heat process that requires carbon line (i.e., soft lead pencil, photocopy, india ink, newspaper, printer's ink) to burn the image into the transparency film. The Technifax system is a light process that uses special translucent master paper (vellum) and a film sensitive to light. The electrostatic film process responds to dark line on a paper master similar to the photocopy technique. The spirit duplication process is a simple matter of running transparency film through the duplicating machine so that the teacher has not only handouts for her audience from the ditto master, but a transparency as well. The color lift process is a matter of lifting the printed ink from a magazine page onto a transparency. There are several techniques for this process, such as using clear contact film or some laminating films that require laminating equipment.

Most teachers present information sequentially. They start with what their students know, relying on the students' knowledge, background and experience; teachers then proceed to what their students do not know in the hope that they will learn new information. Teachers also organize information and try to simplify it for their students. Research in cognitivist psychology has shown that organizing and simplifying information are essential to learning. The overhead projector allows the adult educator to produce messages sequentially, to simplify information, and to present materials in an organized fashion. Through overlays and masking techniques, the teacher can progressively reveal information. Overlays are a series of transparency sheets attached to the frame and flipped onto the stage of the overhead projector at the appropriate time. Masking is a technique of using paper or light cardboard to cover up parts of the message on the transparency film and revealing information in a step-by-step fashion.

The overhead projector allows the teacher to fit the system to his unique teaching style. If the teacher's style is formal and authoritative, then he can use the overhead to support, reinforce and supplement the information presented with this style of teaching. If the teacher uses more of a participatory, non-directive method of teaching, he can use the overhead to encourage discussion, involvement and participation from the audience.

Here are a few guiding principles for use with the

overhead projector:

1. Make all lettering at least 1/4" high to maintain minimum standards for optimum viewing.
2. Transparencies are primarily a visual medium. Keep the design of the image simple, clear and organized. Keep written information on a transparency to a minimum.
3. Check out the room before the presentation, including the ventilation, the lighting, and the seating arrangement. Also check the overhead projector itself. Make sure transparencies are in proper sequence and correct possible viewing problems the audience might have.
4. Avoid keystoning, which occurs when the throw of the light from the lens on the projector is not perpendicular to the screen. Keystoning causes distortion of the image on the screen and possible distraction for the audience.
5. The overhead is ideal for discussion, debate and student participation. Encourage the audience to help you the teacher to create more effective transparencies. One method is to give students an idea or concept and ask them to design a transparency that helps them communicate that idea or concept to their peers. This can be a very effective way to get students more excited and motivated about learning.

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Using Media with Adults

by

John A. Hortin

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Teachers, colleagues and students occasionally ask me, "Which media are most effective for learning?" The answer is not so much a question of which media to use, but rather how to use the media with the audience. Research shows that all types of media from overhead transparencies to video cassettes can be effective.

Effective uses of media in the classroom or at a conference are the result of careful planning on the part of the presenter and participation on the part of the audience. Here are six ways that I have found to use media successfully: (1.) know the audience, (2.) know what it is you want the audience to learn, (3.) gather and select the content, (4.) rehearse the media presentation, (5.) involve the audience in the learning process, and (6.) test or evaluate the experience.

Knowing Your Audience

It is very important to figure out what people in the audience already know about the material you are presenting and what they want to learn. With a class or workshop that meets for more than one session, you as presenter can use part of the first session to determine the background and needs of the audience. A simple question and answer period, a discussion, some role playing or a questionnaire should help you to find some common background and enable you to proceed to the new material in later sessions. Figuring out backgrounds and special needs of the members of the audience helps you reach the principle of transfer.

One of the oldest and most successful methods of teaching is to proceed from the known to the unknown, using the background of the audience or class to "transfer" old experiences to new experiences. You as teacher or presenter can do this by helping students or people in the audience to see

similarities, differences, and relationships between the old knowledge and the new knowledge. Finding media or designing media for the transfer of knowledge is very beneficial. Obviously, you should look for media materials which are at the level of the members of the audience and are appropriate for helping them make the transfer.

For the one-session presentation such as a conference, you do not have the luxury of time to accomodate material or to meet the audience's needs and background. You will have to do some guesswork ahead of time in predicting the level of knowledge of people in the audience, the kinds of backgrounds they may have, and what kind of information they may wish to learn. However, after making several presentations with different audiences, you as presenter usually become fairly adept at guessing what the audience needs. For different audiences, you can provide different materials with the presentation through several kinds of handouts, additional trays of slides, extra videotapes or a variety of group activities that get people in the group involved with the media.

Knowing What You Want to Teach

Obviously, you have some idea of what it is you want to communicate. However, the secret of using media successfully is to know what it is you specifically wish to change in terms of behavior, attitudes, or skills in the audience and to match the media to those objectives. Often teachers and presenters use media as a supplement or haphazardly gear their presentation around the media that they find available. This method may work or it may not. The best media are those media that satisfy the needs of the audience and that are well integrated into the objectives that you the presenter and perhaps, more importantly, your audience has established. Designing your own media rather than using commercially made media gives

you more flexibility to match the media to the objectives. Also, you may find that the media help you focus on some aspect of knowledge and establish some objectives.

Gathering and Selecting Content

The content of the presentation consists of the knowledge, skills, facts, and attitudes that you the presenter research, simplify, and present to the audience. You are the organizer of the information. Media are excellent for presenting information, ideas, values and attitudes in a professional, logical and entertaining way. Designing your own media takes longer to prepare, is more expensive and is perhaps less effective than commercially made media but may be a necessary alternative if commercial materials are not available. In a class of adult learners, the gathering and selecting of content may be a collaborative effort on the part of teacher and students. I have found it very helpful to involve students in searching for, selecting, and organizing materials. In addition to selecting or matching the media to the audience's needs and level of knowledge, you must preview media before showing them to an audience.

Rehearsing the Presentation

After gathering content, selecting media, and designing materials for the presentation, you should then rehearse the presentation both verbally and visually. Rehearsing the presentation will help you with (1.) timing and smoothness in delivery, (2.) self-confidence, (3.) development of style, and (4.) evaluation of the content. Mentally and physically rehearsing the presentation not only involves practicing what you are going to say, but also visualizing the performance. In order to do this you should check out the room ahead of time for placement of seats, lighting control,

ventilation and room temperature, location of media equipment and potential areas for various activities. Then, you should get in a relaxed state of mind, imagine the room filled with the intended audience, and mentally go through the actual performance. I like to do this in my hotel room at a conference a day or two before my presentation. I visit the site of my presentation to make sure that I can do what I have planned but also to make a mental frame of reference for visualizing the performance in my mind.

In the visualization experience you should "see" the performance from two perspectives. One perspective is from your own point of view; that is, you see or focus on your own movements in the room, anticipate or "feel" the possible reactions of the audience, and concentrate on style and content. Your second perspective should be as a third person, a member of the audience, watching yourself (the presenter). Here, you visualize your performance as others would see it. You must make these visualizations positive and control them in order to make them work. Style and content are important parts of visualization and are necessary considerations for a successful media presentation. Style is confidence, smoothness in answering questions, and the establishment of a congenial, scholarly climate. In Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," the character Gwendolen Fairfax says, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing." Style is definitely a plus for any presenter; although you cannot get by without good content, you will be more successful if you have both style and content. Visualization helps you develop a comfortable style, and it also helps you to "see" and evaluate the content.

Involving the Audience

If you can involve the audience directly in the presentation, research shows that your chances for success are greater. Slides, overhead transparencies, flip charts, chalkboards, and graphic materials are excellent media for involving the audience through questions and dialogue. Interactive video and microcomputer software also provide opportunities for learner response. Learning centers are places for individualized experiences set up in the classroom that help students learn through various activities, assignments, and media and allow students to take responsibility for their own learning. Learning centers can be used to teach additional content, provide alternative assistance, meet special needs, reinforce content, test knowledge and provide practice.

Evaluating the Experience

After the presentation, you should evaluate the experience from the audience's point of view as well as your own. To evaluate the experience, you may use all of the following: tests, evaluation forms, discussion, your own reaction, the audience's reaction, feedback from questions and comments. You may find it easier to measure knowledge or skills than attitudes or feelings. Actually, you should be continually evaluating the presentation beginning with the planning period and the preparation itself.

Conclusion

To be successful at using media, you must organize and prepare. Generally, the more you involve your audience in the process of planning and preparation, the more the audience or class will benefit from the actual presentation; however, this involvement is not always possible in a one-session presentation. In selecting media, remember the principle of transfer. Use visualization,

which helps with confidence, style and content. Finally, evaluate during all phases of the instructional process and use evaluation as still another method to involve your audience members directly in controlling their own learning.